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ABSTRACT

This document reviews the state of governance. The need for governance based on a process of social adaptation for organizations and institutions is stressed. However, regardless of the differing mechanism for governance, it is suggested that the central theme of governance does make a difference in defining and maintaining the fundamental goals of the higher education system. (WJM)

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The Center for the Study of Higher Education

The University of Toledo

EDITORIAL OPINION

"How do we 'govern' this place? Quite simply: the way we always have. I am the president and I expect my academic dean to have the faculty under control. After all, if they do not like the way I run my school, they can always go elsewhere. Let them quit if they want. Sure, I listen to recommendations on various issues from my faculty senate, but in the last analysis it is myself with the Board of Trustees who makes the major decisions. The faculty are too easy. They always want to continue with their own program, yet they sit in those offices doing little daily. Many of them cannot even teach well and that is what they are paid to do.

"There were in here the other day supporting a student demand that the college take a stand on the way the town treats students. The faculty members were actually agreeing with the students' assertion that the local government was corrupt.

"I am not here to get involved in such dribble. We are here to educate these kids and it is time that some of the faculty learn to do this without getting the town all excited. It is not my job to reform anybody in the town — my job is only to educate students. If they want to do something about the society, let them wait until they get a job and begin to contribute to it!"

Admittedly, the above college president's opinion is extreme. Yet underneath it is a fifty-four year old man who began his career with a strong personal dedication to teach a prior generation of students — a generation whose values were based on respect for the professor and his knowledge and a private desire to work hard and "get ahead" in American society. The president's dedication is thwarted today, however. He is consumed with the desire to guide his institution through a worsening financial plight and constantly is encountering pressures from townsfolk, alumni, faculty, staff, students, and others. In the midst of it all, the educational purposes of the institution have become blurred. To this president, a college education means a period of quiet meditation and theoretical investigation of intellectual issues, but he is frustrated in his struggle to administer this type of education today.

Although many institutions today could not be classed within such a polarized position, the question implicit above is an important one. Somehow, each of us on every campus needs to come to some agreement as to how we will operationalize our institution today.

At least one educator argues for the need to reinstate direct presidential authority on the modern campus.[1] Nevertheless, the trend on most campuses is toward searching for ways of effectively and meaningfully involving increasing numbers and types of people — i.e. students, faculty, staff — in the administrative process. Some argue that with all of the present committees, boards, coordinating boards, and interest groups, the whole system has so scattered both "power" and "authority" that any attempt to specify how an institution should be administered is, by nature, pure theory. Still others long for days of smaller organizations that can be more personally administered. The realist amongst us then argues that none of the above matters anyway since the crucial factor is the particular individuals in the administrative slots, not the governance system.

Hence, one is often tempted to toss up one's hands in despair and conclude that the issues are so complex today that it does not really matter. Things will stay the same in any case.

Does it really make any difference how we organize our institutions? Professor G. Lester Anderson brings a fresh perspective to this question and tailors his answer with the experience he has personally accumulated by watching and being involved with institutions of higher education for many years. Listen carefully to his counsel.

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[1] Lewis B. Mayhew. **Arrogance On Campus.** San Francisco: Jossey Bass Inc., 1970.

DOES GOVERNANCE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

G. Lester Anderson*

The answer to the title question is, "Yes." Governance does make a difference. What is currently at stake — as colleges and universities undergo internal pressures for changes in decision-making processes and also as to who shall make these decisions and external pressures for surrender of large segments of their traditional autonomy — is: "Who shall control the University and to what ends?" The Universities (and the colleges) are always a threat to the social, economic, political, and moral milieu. The nature of society is what colleges and universities are about, — they are society's critics and they provide the knowledge and conceptual base for social change. Groups internal to the university, either for their own purposes, (e.g. students), or others, (e.g. administrators in response to "outsiders"), want the university or college to reorganize their systems of authority and power. And so it is with governors, legislators, congressmen, courts, and the general body politic — these persons do not like what they see taking place in colleges and universities, and they want, consequently, to change these institutions.

A part of the situation which colleges and universities face is that they have never been well understood by those who support them, i.e. the larger society. Indeed, they are not always well understood by their own constituencies, — students, alumni, faculty, or administrators. If they had been and were now understood, they possibly might not be under attack. What is involved is the potential which colleges and universities have to change society. Indeed, this is a major responsibility of higher education in the Western world. This responsibility will be discussed later and its relevance to an understanding of the current ferment regarding governance will be developed. It is this responsibility that is at issue and at stake. Because the significance of this responsibility is not generally recognized, let alone appreciated, the fundamental issue: "Who make the decisions" is not perceived in its full significance. The relationships inherent in purposes and governance will now be sketched out.

In the late 1950's I had occasion to review and synthesize the literature on college and university organization and administration.[1] At that time I reported that there was very little research or study based on theoretical or conceptual organizational systems. The literature was empirical, descriptive and often hortatory. It was not until after 1960, when Corson published his book, *Governance of Colleges and Universities*,[2] that the term governance began to be freely used regarding the university, and systems of governance began to be analyzed. In 1961, I prepared a paper which reviewed the nature of universities in terms of such organizational concepts as community, collegium, and bureaucracy.[3] This statement was perhaps the first such analysis and was somewhat primitive in concept. Today, however, we have a series of studies that apply concepts derived from sociological and political theory to college and university organization and administration. Caplow and McGee's *The Academic Marketplace*,[4] Millet's *The Academic Community*,[5] Dressel's (et al) *The Confidence Crisis*,[6] Kruythosch and Messinger's *The State of the University*,[7] as well as Corson's work are simply illustrative of the attention that has been given in conceptual terms to the college and university organization in the last dozen or so years.

This work rests on the fundamental organizational concepts of men like Weber and Parsons, and the more directly applied works of Barnard, Simon, March, Thompson, Blau, Presthus, Gouldner, McGregor, Bennis, Selznick, and many others.

What is emerging is a two-pronged analysis of college and university organization and decision-making. Arising primarily from the sociological literature are concepts of universities as organizations. Are they bureaucracies? Are they communities? Does it make any difference? Arising primarily from the literature of political theory are concepts of processes relevant to decision-making. Who has power? Who has authority? Who has influence? Does it make any difference?

It should be clear that these modes of organization and operation do make a difference in the functioning of organizations. If bureaucratic forms for university organization grow and prevail decisions will be made in bureaucratic terms. Efficiency or measures of output will be controlling.

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[1] G. Lester Anderson. "Colleges and Universities—Organization and Administration." **Encyclopedia of Educational Research**. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1960, pp. 252-266.

[2] John Corson. **Governance of Colleges and Universities**. New York: McGraw Hill, 1960.

[3] G. Lester Anderson. "The Organizational Character of American Colleges and Universities." **The Study of Administration**. Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1963, pp. 1-19.

[4] Theodore Caplow. **The Academic Marketplace**. Theodore Caplow and Reese J. McGee, Eds. New York: Basic Books, 1958.

[5] John David Millet. **The Academic Community**. New York: McGraw Hill, 1962.

[6] Paul Leroy Dressel, F. Craig Johnson, and Philip M. Marcus. **The Confidence Crisis**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1970.

[7] Carlos E. Kruythosch and Sheldon L. Messinger. **The State of the University**. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977.

Goals will be explicitly set in measurable outputs. Persons skilled in the technologies of management and organizational evaluation will dominate the system. Questions such as the following will be controlling: How many degrees were granted? How many credit hours were generated? How many contact hours were spent in the classroom by the faculty by rank? How many public lectures were held? How many persons attended? How many pages of scholarly publication were generated by the faculty? Order and efficiency will be controlling concepts.

If community or collegial forms of organization grow and dominate the system, decisions will be made in terms of other criteria. Efficiency will be only an incidental criterion of worth. Values without quantitative counterparts will be held in high esteem. Questions of the following type when asked and answered will seem to determine the worth of the college or university: How much freedom is present on the campus? What prize winning books were written? Is the campus congenial to the eccentric? Are students challenging? Are rules flexible and lightly enforced? Do avant-garde or deviant processes of education or ideas of education find a warm reception?

If one turns to political models for the university or to an identification of decision makers based on concepts of power, authority and influence, another dimension for evaluation of governance emerges. Do trustees hold the power of decision making regarding curriculum, requirements for degrees and who shall teach? Or, do the faculty? Are trustees, trustees in the sense of *conservers* of the value system of the college and university? Or do trustees see themselves as significant decision makers in the management affairs of the institution? Do faculty view themselves as employees, much as school teachers do, who make decisions within the classroom, but leave the big decisions to administrators and others? Or, do faculty see *themselves as the institution or organization*, — as professionals, as determiners of the nature and processes of education and scholarship?

There is little doubt that the larger environment is pressing in on the college and university to change its decision-making processes. Courts, governors, legislators, trustees are asking faculty and staff to be accountable in terms not of faculty values, but social values. Who is to tell the scholar what to do becomes a critical question? Shall it be governors, legislators, courts or the community of scholars? Internally, powerful forces are at work through the collegial administration, the bureaucracies, and in terms of *student* demands to limit markedly the autonomy which the scholar has had to do *his thing*. He must account to students and administrators for the quality of his teaching as he has never before had to account. He must justify his work schedule and his work day. He is being asked to give up tenure. He is asked to surrender personal privilege and individual negotiation in order to protect himself and his peer group through modes of the labor union, — collective bargaining or negotiation.

It is certain that new modes of organization and governance are emerging. On the basis of what criteria will decisions of rejection and selection be made? Will it be concepts of accountability to *present* social forms, processes and structures? Will it be in terms of the historic role of the scholar-teacher who has been conserver, transmitter, and creator of knowledge and culture, and the critic of society? It is in these latter terms, that the scholar and his organizational home — the college and university — have made their unique contribution to western culture. It is the forms of western culture — in its openness, in its ethics, in its moral values, in its tremendous utilization of knowledge to build an affluent society — that are subtly challenged as classical forms of college and university governance are modified. Such subtle challenges may become effective challenges to certain of the historically accepted goals of our university and college systems.

To point out effects of differing mechanisms for governance in their potential for mischief in changing the goals of higher education is perhaps to support a current status quo. This is not necessarily so. Change is a process of social adaption for organizations and institutions. Change has characterized American higher education in all its aspects — in terms of its purposes, its structure and its operation. Change is certainly needed today and in the next several decades if the university and the college are to continue their relevance. But few are discussing changes in organization and governance in terms of their threat to higher educational institution purposes.

The current discussion must go beyond a defense of the status quo. As courts, governors, legislatures, budget directors and other public agencies and officials secure power to control the higher educational establishments, it is not enough to deplore the present and defend the past. We must ask: What differences will it make? Do we want these differences? Public bodies want safe institutions. They often do not want the university — its faculty or its students — to be powerful agents in pointing out the consequences of racism, of war,

or urban ghettos, or of environmental spoilage. But this is what universities are here to do in a socially constructive sense. It is the administrators, faculty and indeed students and alumni who must see what is happening in governance in terms of its consequences.

It is certain that old modes of governance will not endure without challenge or change. If "tenure" has protected not only those who courageously criticize but also the slothful or the obsolete, perhaps new modes for protection of academic freedom will be invented. Many faculty who are established, professional, and satisfied have opposed collective negotiations as a mode of faculty involvement in decision-making and a new mode of establishing tenure rights. But it may be that the total academic community in the long view of events will become better served than it has been served by faculty ranking and tenure provisions. It has been pointed out that the "very purpose" of the institution can become negotiable in a collective bargaining process. Hence, if goals are threatened by recent changes, both internal and external, in governance they may be restored under conditions of collective bargaining.

A variety of other relationships could be explored. Who should arbitrate conflict? To what degree should administration be decentralized? What is at issue as between statewide coordinating mechanisms and institutional autonomy? But a point has been made. This essay has had as its central theme the idea that governance does make a difference and in a most fundamental sense it makes a difference in defining and maintaining the most fundamental goals of the higher educational system — the advancement of knowledge.

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